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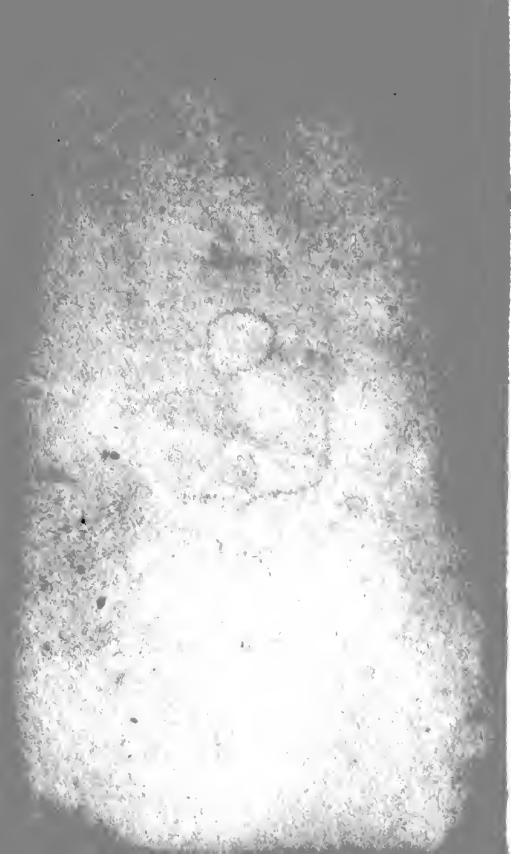
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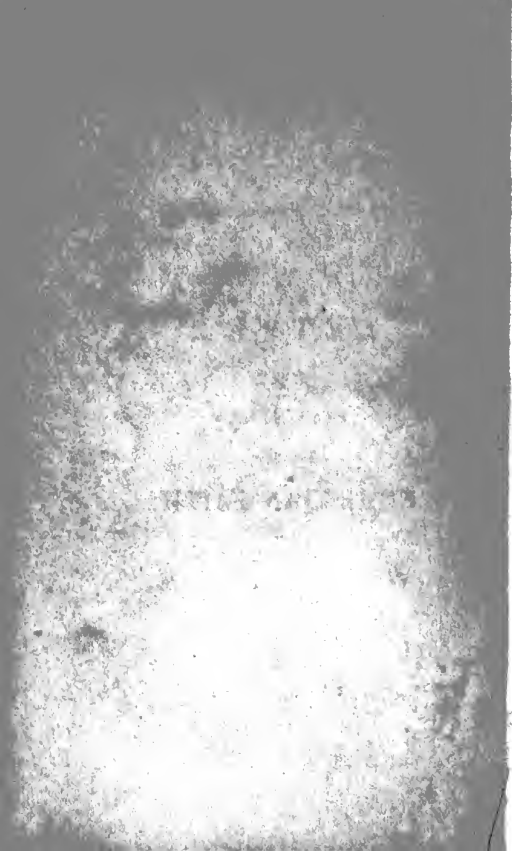
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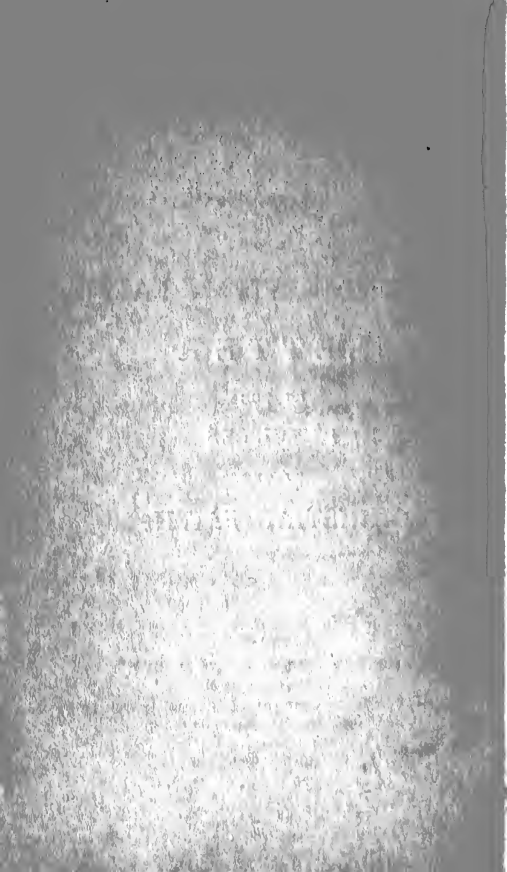








A
L E T T E R
ON THE
PRINCIPLES
OF THE
CHRISTIAN FAITH.



A LETTER
ON
THE PRINCIPLES
OF
THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

BY HANNAH SINCLAIR,
DAUGHTER OF THE RT. HON. SIR J. SINCLAIR, BART.

NINETEENTH EDITION.

WITH A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR,
BY THE LATE
REV. LEGH RICHMOND.

LONDON :
THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY,
Instituted 1799.
SOLD AT THE DEPOSITORY, 56, PATERNOSTER ROW,
AND BY THE BOOKSELLERS.

MDCCCXXXVI.

BUNGAY: PRINTED BY J. R. AND C. CHILDS.

LETTER
FROM HER ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE DUCHESS OF KENT,
TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
SIR JOHN SINCLAIR, BART.
AUTHORIZING THE DEDICATION OF MISS HANNAH
SINCLAIR'S TRACT,
"On the Principles of the Christian Faith,"
TO
THE PRINCESS VICTORIA.

KENSINGTON PALACE, *Dec. 3, 1832.*

SIR,

I have this morning had the pleasure of receiving your letter of the 29th ultimo. I can easily enter into your parental feelings on the subject on which you address me ; and I very readily lend myself to your wish,—that I should permit you to dedicate to the Princess Victoria the Seventeenth Edition of "*The Principles of the Christian Faith*," written by your late lamented daughter.

I remain,

SIR,

Yours very sincerely,

VICTORIA.

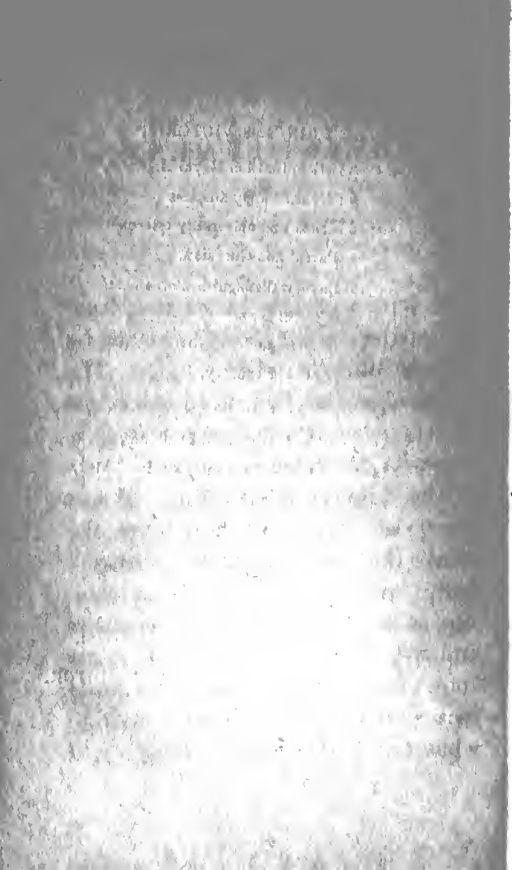


TO
THE PRINCESS VICTORIA,
In the conviction, that her Royal Highness,
under the happy auspices
of her illustrious and universally esteemed
Parent and Guardian,
will prove a most distinguished ornament
of her sex
and
of her country,
THIS WORK;
composed by his deceased Daughter,
whose life was a model of the piety she inculcated,
is,
with permission,
Dedicated,
By her ROYAL HIGHNESS'S
most faithful,
and very obedient Servant,

THE EDITOR.

133, *George Street, Edinburgh,*

December 24, 1832.



ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

FIRST EDITION.

THE writer of this Letter was, from her earliest infancy, distinguished by a warm attachment to religion. The knowledge she had acquired of its doctrines, as well as her accomplishments in many other respects, were of the highest description. It was her great delight to explain to the young the principles of the christian faith ; and she took a peculiar pleasure in the instruction of her brothers and sisters. One of the latter, my (now) fifth daughter, had earnestly requested her to put down in writing what she had frequently explained

in discourse. The result of that application was the following Letter, which, though never intended to be printed, I feel it incumbent upon me to publish, for the satisfaction of her friends, and for the benefit of others. During her life, nothing gave my dear daughter so much delight as doing good ; and if the spirits of the departed are conscious of what passes on earth, she will rejoice at being still enabled to contribute to the benefit of those whom she has left behind her.

The much-valued writer of this Epistle had, for several years, been afflicted with complaints of a consumptive tendency. In going about, as usual, for religious and benevolent purposes, in January last, she unfortunately caught cold, which in-

creased her indisposition to so great a degree, that it baffled the skill of the able professional characters who attended her during her illness ; and after above four months of slow decay, she expired, without the least appearance of a struggle, on the morning of the 22nd of May, (1818.) It was with her a favourite doctrine, “That a *lingering*, was better than a *sudden* death, as it gave the real christian an opportunity of doing good to others, by the example of resignation and of piety which it furnished.” In that wish she was gratified, and she never failed to avail herself of the opportunities thus afforded her of acting upon an idea so truly beautiful and sublime.

It is not too much to add, that no one ever saw her temper ruffled, or

ever heard her say any thing harsh or unfeeling respecting the conduct or the motives of others. She never wilfully committed any error, nor ever omitted to do good when an opportunity presented itself. In regard to the purity and excellence of her religious sentiments, let the following pages testify. No human being, on the whole, could be better prepared for the awful change she has undergone. But that very circumstance, which is the source of so much consolation to her afflicted friends, must aggravate the grief they feel for the heavy loss they have sustained.

JOHN SINCLAIR.

*Ormsly Lodge,
Ham Common, Surrey, }
27th May, 1818.*

A L E T T E R,

&c. &c.

ADDRESSED TO

MISS CATHERINE SINCLAIR.

Ormly Lodge, Oct. 1817.

MY DEAR CATHERINE,

THERE are few things which have afforded me more satisfaction, than the manner in which you, and your brothers and sisters, have uniformly received the instructions which I have attempted to give you on the subject of religion. The attention with which you have listened to me, the candour you have shown in appreciating my motives,

and the good humour with which you have taken any thing I may have said to you in the way of reproof, shall ever be remembered by me with affectionate gratitude.

You expressed, some days ago, a wish that I would put down in writing the substance of some of those conversations which have passed between us on this most important subject ; and with this request I shall most readily comply. It could only proceed, on your part, from a sincere desire of farther instruction ; and though I am deeply conscious of my own inability to write, on such a subject, as I could wish, yet, as I can with truth say, that before I took the pen in my hand, I earnestly implored the Divine blessing on my feeble efforts, I am not without hopes that they may not prove altogether in vain.

You are aware that one of my chief aims has been, to impress upon your mind, by a variety of arguments and considerations, the superiority of what is called the evangelical system of religion over every other ; and also to explain to you what that system is. It consists of several doctrines, closely connected with each other, and which all appear to be plainly revealed in scripture.

The first of these doctrines, and the foundation of all the rest, is that of the deep depravity and corruption of human nature. This doctrine, in the main, is not, I believe, denied by any ; but the evangelical preachers explain it in a different manner from what others do. By others it is considered *as a slight taint* ;—by them it is represented *as a deep pollution* ; a total alienation of the heart from God, which is most culpable.

and wholly inexcusable, in his sight. So far is man, in a state of nature, from loving God above all things, that there is scarcely any thing which he does not prefer to God. To the majority of the world, what duty is so irksome as that of prayer? What day so wearisome as the sabbath? What time so long as that which is spent at church? What books so uninteresting as those which treat of religion?

Besides this dislike and repugnance to the exercise of devotion, or, in other words, to all manner of intercourse with God, there is in fallen man a spirit of disobedience and rebellion against his Maker. It is true, that many of the persons here described do fulfil various moral duties, and so far obey his commands; but they do not obey them *because they are his commands.*

Generally speaking, some motive of interest, pleasure, or vanity, of self-gratification of one kind or other, secretly influences them ; or, if they do pay any regard to God at all, it is the fear of his wrath which prompts them. They do not obey from a sincere filial desire of pleasing him, but from dread of a power which they know cannot be resisted. Such is man by nature, without any exception. This charge may be brought with as much justice against the decent and moral as against the vicious and profane. Nay, even the most eminent christians, though this is no longer their character, will most readily acknowledge that it was once so. They can all of them remember a time when they were exactly in the condition here described. Now as God has repeatedly declared in scripture, that he will on no

account admit into his presence those who are thus alienated from him, it follows, of course, that if we live and die in this state, we must perish for ever ; or, to use our Saviour's own words, " Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," John iii. 3. The change which our Saviour alludes to in these words, is described in the Bible under a great variety of figures and phrases, such as, being " renewed," 2 Cor. iv. 16 ; Eph. iv. 23 ; Col. iii. 10, and " sanctified," 1 Cor. i. 2 ; vi. 11 ; Rom. xv. 16 ; being adopted into the family of God, Rom. viii. 15 ; Gal. iv. 5, 6 ; Eph. i. 5 ; being no longer " under the law, but under grace," Rom. vi. 14 ; having " passed from death to life," John v. 24 ; 1 John iii. 14 ; &c. &c. : and St. Paul expressly says, " If any man be in Christ,

he is a new creature : old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new," 2 Cor. v. 17 ; by which is plainly signified, not only that the change must be great, but that it must be universal ; that "all things must become new."

To describe, as plainly and distinctly as I can, wherein this change consists, shall be the purport of the remainder of this Letter. May God grant that you, my dear Catherine, and every member of the family to which we belong, may know by experience what it means ; for I must again remind you, that unless such a change be made upon every one of us, at some period or other of our lives, we are assured by the Saviour himself, that we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, John iii. 3.

In describing this change, the first thing

which I shall mention, is, that every true convert becomes much more sensible than he ever was before, of his need of a Saviour. Though all are ready to acknowledge themselves to be sinners, yet those who are in a state of nature, are not fully sensible of what St. Paul calls the exceeding sinfulness of sin, Rom. vii. 13 ; but Divine grace opens our eyes in that respect, shows us our deep depravity, humbles us in the very dust on account of our manifold transgressions, and compels us to acknowledge there is justice in the sentence which condemns us to everlasting punishment. For to those whose eyes are thus opened to behold their guilt and danger, the gospel becomes a joyful sound, and the Saviour is indeed precious. They can enter into the meaning of St. Paul's words when he says, that he counts all

things but loss that he may win Christ, and be found in him ; not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is by faith in him, Philip. iii. 8, 9. Instead of their former apathy and indifference about religion, they delight in reading about the Saviour—in thinking of him—in listening to those sermons of which he is the theme ; and the chief desire, the most earnest wish of their hearts, is, that they may be admitted to a further acquaintance and to an intimate union with him.

And here I would take notice of a peculiarity in the evangelical system, which was well explained by Mr. Gandy* in one of his sermons, and which I have often

* Vicar of Kingston.

heard mentioned by Dr. Buchanan,* and other preachers of his class: I mean the distinction of our Saviour's righteousness into active and passive. His death and sufferings form what is called his passive obedience. By them he made atonement for our sins; but you know that our Lord, while he was upon earth, not only died, and suffered before his death a variety of tortures, but that he lived a most meritorious life, fulfilled all righteousness, and practised every virtue in its utmost purity and extent. Now, a mere moral preacher would tell you, that he did this *only* that he might leave us an example that we might follow his steps;

* One of the ministers of the Canongate, Edinburgh, in whose sermons, as well as those of Mr. Gandy, the writer of this Letter took a peculiar delight.

and no doubt this was one end which he had in view, but it was not the sole nor the chief end. The scripture tells us, that he obeyed for us, Rom. v. 19 ; that he fulfilled all righteousness in our stead ; that his righteousness is imputed to us, Rom. iv. 11 ; and that by his obedience many are made righteous, Rom. v. 19. We must then believe, not only that we are sinners, and stand in need of his blood to atone for our guilt, and to save us from hell, but that we stand in equal need of his righteousness to entitle us to heaven—that we can never claim any reward on account of our own defective obedience, *but solely on account of his all-perfect righteousness.*

Are we then sensible that we are sinners ? Let us think of the blood of Jesus, and believe that it cleanseth from all sin, 1 John i. 7. Do we, on the other hand, lament

the many defects which attend even our best performances? Are we afraid that such an imperfect obedience as ours is, can never be acceptable to God? Let us think of him who has perfectly fulfilled all righteousness, and believe that his righteousness *shall be imputed to us*, if we are only sincerely willing that it should be so. I mean if we *sincerely*, and from the heart, renounce all dependence upon ourselves, upon any thing we ever have done or can do in future, and rely solely and entirely on the Lord Jesus, for pardon, salvation, and every spiritual blessing. This, believe me, is no easy matter. This is the rock upon which the great majority of the children of Adam do split and suffer shipwreck. It is, indeed, what none are brought to but by the effectual teaching of the Holy Ghost; for though

it may be easy in words to renounce all dependence on ourselves, yet to feel in our hearts how lost and undone, how guilty and depraved we are, and how incapable of ourselves of doing any thing that is truly good, even of thinking a good thought, and at the same time to feel that implicit confidence and firm reliance on the Saviour which the Bible requires, is one of the hardest tasks which ever was proposed to fallen man. It is so contrary to his pride, and to his natural notions, and, indeed, it is *so very hard a task*, that we might well despair of ever being able to fulfil it, were it not for the promise of Divine assistance.

Faith, we are told, is the gift of God. This cannot well be said of a mere historical faith ; but in reference to the faith I have just been describing, it is perfectly true that

God alone can bestow it. The propensity to self-dependence in fallen man is so very strong, that nothing less than Almighty power can completely destroy it. To God, then, let us apply for this faith with fervent and repeated entreaties. Like the unfortunate widow, let us give him, so to speak, no rest till he bestow upon us this inestimable blessing. If we do obtain it, from that moment *we are safe*—as safe as if we were actually in heaven. “He that believeth on me,” says the Saviour, “hath everlasting life,” John iii. 36 ; also vi. 47. Observe the expression : not, *shall have it*, but *hath it already*—is as secure of it as those who now enjoy it. From the moment we thus believe, Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us, and thus do we become righteous without works, Rom. iv. 6, and if it should

please God to take us immediately from this world after we have obtained this precious faith, but before we have it in our power to perform any good work, as was the case with the thief on the cross, like him we should immediately be with our Saviour in paradise.

But here, perhaps, some may ask, Is not this licentious doctrine? Will not believers be encouraged by this assurance of being *righteous without works*,* Rom. iv. 6,

* It is proper here to explain what seems to be the author's doctrine regarding that important point, the union of faith and good works. Real faith is sufficient without works, where there is no opportunity, from sudden death, to perform any; but if there is an opportunity, and if that opportunity is neglected, it is an evident sign that it is not the faith of the gospel, "but a false and spurious imitation of it, with which the ungodly amuse and deceive themselves."—EDITOR.

to continue in sin ? I answer, No. True believers cannot continue in sin, because *God has declared that they shall not*, Rom. vi. 14. He who justifies *will also sanctify them*, 1 Cor. vi. 11. He who first made man after his own image, can and will renew believers after the same image. We are told in scripture, that God hath predestinated his people “to be conformed to the image of his Son,” Rom. viii. 29. He hath promised to write his law in their hearts, and to put it in their inward parts, Jer. xxxi. 33—to take away from them their hard and stony hearts, and to “give them an heart of flesh,” Ezek. xi. 19—to cause them to walk in his statutes, Ezek. xxxvi. 27, and to incline their hearts to his testimonies, Deut. vi. 17 ; Psa. cxix. 36—to work in them “both to will and to do of his good pleasure,”

Philip. ii. 13. The hearts of men, you know, are in the hands of God ; like the rivers of water, he turneth them which way soever he will, Prov. xxi. 1. If he then has promised to change the hearts of believers, who or what should hinder him from effecting this change ? Is he a man, that he should lie ; or the son of man, that he should repent ? Hath he said, and shall he not do it ? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good ? Numb. xxiii. 19.

It is true, indeed, that there are some who pretend to have faith, and who fancy themselves believers, and yet continue to lead a sinful, wicked life ; but their faith is not the faith of the gospel. Of true faith we are told, that it purifies the heart, Acts xv. 9, works by love, Gal. v. 6, and overcomes the world, 1 John v. 4 ;

and whatever is not productive of these effects is not true faith, but only some false and spurious imitation of it, with which the ungodly amuse and deceive themselves. In fact, a true believer looks to Jesus *for sanctification*, as well as for justification. He abhors sin, he longs to be delivered from it, and would account nothing worthy of the name of salvation which did not include a deliverance from the power and prevalence, as well as from the guilt and punishment of sin.

And here I would observe, that a belief in the doctrines of the gospel has in itself a tendency to produce in the heart all the virtues and graces of the christian life. Before, however, I proceed to prove this point, I shall premise a few observations, which may be necessary to obviate objections, and prevent mistakes on the subject.

But first, let me remind you, that sanctification is a gradual work. The change I am describing, from sin to holiness, from the love of the world to the love of God, is not instantaneous, but resembles the morning light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day, Prov. iv. 18. *An established christian* differs in many respects from a young convert; and, generally speaking, that difference is in no respect more visible, than in their feelings and experience relative to the pleasures of religion. A young convert is usually beset with doubts, anxieties, and fears. He feels and knows himself to be a sinner; is depressed by a sense of his own guilt and infirmities; and has not yet learned to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and to cast all the burden of his sins upon him. But, by degrees, more light is

communicated to his mind ;—he perceives how God can be just, and yet the justifier of him who believes in Jesus ;—he applies all the promises of the gospel to himself ;—he looks to Jesus, not merely as the Saviour of sinners, but as *his own Saviour* ; and believes, not merely that he died for mankind in general, but *for himself in particular* ;—and thus he learns to look forward to heaven, as “*his own certain portion and inheritance*,” not for any works of righteousness which he has done, but solely because he is united *by faith* to the all-sufficient Saviour.

Some perhaps may tell you, that this is not consistent with humility ; but they mistake the nature of *christian humility*, which does not consist in believing that *we are* going to hell, but that *we deserve* to go

there. Who was ever more humble than St. Paul? He disparages himself in almost every page of his writings; yet he speaks of his own salvation with the utmost confidence—expresses a wish to be absent from the body, that he might be present with the Lord, 2 Cor. v. 8—says, that he had “a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better,” Phil. i. 23—and that to him “to live is Christ, and to die is gain,” Phil. i. 21. And he describes christians in general, as those who “rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,” or in themselves, Phil. iii. 3—plainly showing, that these two feelings are no way inconsistent with each other. A criminal may believe himself to be worthy of death; yet, if he receives a pardon, he no longer fears death. Thus it is with

christians—they believe themselves to be pardoned for Christ's sake.

It is true, indeed, as I formerly observed, that young converts do not usually view things in this light; for faith, generally speaking, is a gradual attainment. It is also true, that established christians, may have their seasons of doubt and dejection; but this is owing to the weakness of their faith, and these seasons are their worst seasons. A variety of circumstances also, such as nervous and other diseases, temptations, and misfortunes of various sorts, may depress the spirits of christians: but notwithstanding all these exceptions, for which due allowances should be made, it is perfectly true that the spirit of the gospel is a spirit of hope, peace, and joy, and that the “children of Zion” are not only humble,

but “joyful in their King,” Psa. cxlix. 2. Now, what are the effects of this christian joy?

St. John tells us, that “every man who hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure,” 1 John iii. 3. And I shall proceed to prove to you, that the hope of the gospel not only fills the mind with a peace “which passeth all understanding,” Phil. iv. 7, but that it is the best of all preservatives against temptation, and is eminently productive of every good word and work. To love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, Deut. vi. 5; Matt. xxii. 37, is, you know, the first and great commandment; but how can we love God, if we believe, or even suspect him to be our enemy?—“We love him,” says St. John, “because he first

loved us," 1 John iv. 19. Those who look upon God as their reconciled Father through Jesus Christ ; who believe that he loves them with an everlasting love, which will endure to all eternity ; that he will cause " all things to work together for their good," Rom. viii. 28, in this world, and will finally receive them into his blissful presence, not on account of any works of righteousness which they have done, but solely because he has been graciously pleased to give his own Son to suffer and die for them ;—those who firmly believe all this, will find it easy to love God, nay, impossible not to love him. Such benefits would melt even a heart of stone, and transform it into a heart of flesh ; and those who thus love God *will take real pleasure in his ordinances,* and in the public and private exercises of

devotion. They pray to him with real fervour; they praise him with real gratitude; they are glad when it is said to them, Let us go up to the house of God, Isaiah ii. 3,—even to God, our “exceeding joy,” Psa. xliii. 4.

I do not much wonder, that the people of this world find the exercises of devotion so tiresome. To them, they suggest nothing but gloomy, or, at best, uninteresting ideas; but to the christian, they present views, which are not only sublime and interesting, but transporting and delightful. Nay, sometimes when he is enabled, by the Spirit of God, to draw nigh with the full assurance of faith, or when he is listening to an eloquent sermon from an evangelical preacher, he almost feels as if he were already transported to that heaven to which his thoughts habitually tend.

I observe further, that the belief of this system of doctrine must have a still more direct tendency to promote in us the love of Christ. Surely those who believe him to be *their own Saviour*, and that he died *for them*, will feel more love and gratitude towards him, than those who merely look upon him as the Saviour of sinners in general. They can adopt the language of St. Peter, and exultingly speak of their Redeemer, as of him, whom not having seen, they love ; in whom, though now they see him not, yet believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, 1 Pet. i. 8.

And this love to Christ produces in their souls a sincere love and affection for their fellow-creatures. As the blessed Jesus is now in heaven, and they upon earth, they

cannot personally give him any proofs of their affectionate gratitude; but they can do what they know is, in his estimation, equivalent. You, of course, remember the beautiful and affecting words of our adorable Redeemer: "Forasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me," Matt. xxv. 40. ; These words make a strong impression upon every real christian. When he beholds an object in distress whom it is in his power to relieve, he looks upon it as an opportunity of showing his gratitude to him, who died for his offences, and rose again for his justification, Rom. iv. 25.

I would further remark, that all mankind may be divided into two classes—those who are christians, and those who are not. Now, a christian finds no difficulty whatever

in loving his fellow-christians, as they have the same views, the same hopes, the same desires, the same fears, the same aversions, and the same Saviour. So complete a sympathy cannot fail to excite affection and esteem ; and, with regard to those who are not christians, though a believer does not love them in the same manner that he loves his brethren, (I mean, that he does not take pleasure in their society,) and that he cannot join in their feelings and sentiments, yet he looks upon them with the sincerest pity, and with an anxious wish to promote their spiritual benefit. As he knows, by experience, the full value of the change which has passed upon his own heart, he is desirous to communicate that bliss to all around him ; and as he truly loves his Saviour, he is solicitous to increase the

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number of his subjects. This desire to do good, prompts him to avoid whatever might appear harsh and repulsive, and to be courteous and obliging, kind and benevolent, even to those whom he cannot esteem; hoping that by these means he may gain access to their hearts, and may become the honoured instrument of promoting their eternal salvation.

Thus I have endeavoured to prove, I hope to your satisfaction, that the evangelical system of religion has the most direct and powerful tendency to promote in our hearts the love of God and of our neighbour; and if I have proved this, I have proved every thing; for, as our Saviour observes, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets," Matt. xxii. 40; that is to say, those who truly love both

God and their neighbour, will fulfil all the various duties which they owe to both.

I cannot, however, quit this part of my subject without making one observation more, which is, that the faith of the gospel is our best preservative against the snares both of prosperity and of adversity; which remark I propose to explain at some length.

To begin then with prosperity. The chief danger attending that state is, that it strongly exposes us to the temptation or becoming "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God," 2 Tim. iii. 4; and this danger is considerably increased, when those whose outward circumstances are on the whole prosperous, are also young and lively, and have been introduced into gay and fashionable circles. Persons in such circumstances may be said to stand on the

brink of a precipice. They run the greatest risk of being drawn into a vortex of folly and dissipation, in which all sense of religion is likely to be swallowed up. But the faith of the gospel, that faith which I have been describing, not only fortifies the mind against such temptations, but I might almost venture to say that, to a real believer, they cease to be temptations at all. Ask an eminent christian, who has just been rejoicing in his Saviour, whether he would be willing to give up these delightful contemplations, or even to suspend the exercise of them for a while, that he might go to a play, or a ball, or to read a novel, and he would be apt to smile at the question. Not only does he look upon these amusements as vain and insnaring ; not only does he know that they are apt to steal away the heart from

God, to indispose him for the exercises of devotion, and to draw him back, as it were, to that world from whence he has with so much difficulty escaped; not only does he avoid them on these accounts, but he can with truth say, that he has altogether lost his relish for them, in the same manner as you, now that you are grown up, have lost your relish for the toys and amusements of children. It is true, indeed, that a christian may be so circumstanced, as to be obliged to mix more with gay circles, and to join more in vain diversions, than he could wish; but when that is the case, he will enter into them with real reluctance, and will gladly escape from them as soon as he can.

I ought to add, however, especially in writing to a young person like you, that this change from the love of pleasure to

the love of God, is usually gradual, and that a young convert does not, generally speaking, gain so complete a victory over the world at once.

I proceed now to remark that the faith of the gospel is not only our best preservative against the snares of prosperity, but that its blessed effects are equally conspicuous *in adversity*. It silences murmurs ; it inspires contentment and resignation ; nay, it is a firm and effectual support in the midst of every calamity to which a believer can be exposed. Is the christian visited with sickness ? he anticipates the period when pain and sorrow shall for ever flee away. Is he oppressed by poverty ? he reflects on the treasure which he possesses in heaven. Is he deprived of a friend ? he looks forward to the time when he shall join the society of

saints and angels. In short, he knows and believes that all things shall work together for his good, Rom. viii. 28 ; and that his light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work out for him a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

There is one evil, however, which I have not yet mentioned, and which, to the people of this world, is the most formidable of all—I mean *death*. Now here it is that the triumph of the evangelical principles is complete. I allow, indeed, that some weak christians may, at such a trying period, be assailed with unreasonable doubts and fears ; but I am speaking of those who are strong in faith ; and they are enabled, even in the immediate prospect of dissolution, to give glory to God. They know in whom they

have believed. They know that, though utterly vile and worthless in themselves, they are complete in Christ, Coloss. ii. 10; and, relying on his mediation, they can fearlessly commit their souls into the hands of that merciful Creator, who has already pardoned, justified, and sanctified them. Though their heart and flesh do faint and fail, they can lift up their heads with joy, knowing that their "redemption draweth nigh," Luke xxi. 28; and some of them can even adopt the triumphant language of St. Paul, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 55. 57.

Thus, my dear Catherine, have I endeavoured to describe to you the life and the death of an eminent christian; and, let me

ask you, would it not be desirable to lead such a life, and to die such a death, independently even of the eternal recompence of reward? Surely a life of peace and joy, and a death of exultation and triumph, are in themselves preferable to any thing which this world can bestow.

But perhaps you will tell me, that you do not dispute this, but that you wish to know how this precious faith is to be obtained. How is it possible for us, frail mortals, surrounded as we are with the objects of time and sense, and with a great variety of temptations, thus to live above the world—thus to dwell among heavenly objects? I answer, in the words of our Saviour, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible,” Matt. xix. 26. —“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw

nigh to you," James iv. 8. There is no spiritual blessing whatever but may be obtained from the Almighty, "by earnest persevering prayer." But when you pray, *beware of formality*. Many think, that when they have uttered before God a set form of well-chosen words, they have done all that can be required of them. But I would not call this praying. When you pray, you should use the same earnestness and importunity which you would employ in requesting from an earthly friend some favour which you had very much at heart. And be solicitous also for an answer to your prayers. Many pray without even thinking of an answer ; and how can they expect to obtain one? Surely you would not bestow a favour upon any one, who, the moment after having asked it, turned away without

waiting for a reply. If you then would really desire to be renewed and sanctified, look up daily, I might almost say hourly, to Him who alone can effect this change; and examine carefully, and frequently also, into the state of your own mind, in order that you may ascertain whether your prayers have been heard and answered. If you can perceive any symptoms of this blessed change in yourself, be thankful to God, and pray earnestly, that you may be renewed yet more and more; and pray to him *in faith*, believing, that what you ask of him in the name of Christ, you shall in due time receive; and this will give vigour and alacrity to your prayers.

I have sometimes thought, that real christians may be said to possess an *additional sense*. They see what is invisible to others. Like Stephen, they behold with

their mental eyes the heavens opened, and Christ sitting at the right hand of God, Acts vii. 56. But we can no more confer on ourselves this additional sense, than we can add to the number of our bodily senses. In fact, every conversion is so entirely brought about by the agency of the Spirit of God, that it may be called a *miracle*; and only differs from the miraculous cures recorded in the Gospels, in this respect, that the latter were outward and visible miracles, whereas the former is an inward and invisible one.

But here I would remind you of what happened to the blind man who was sent to wash in the pool of Siloam. Though the miracle was performed by the power of our Saviour alone, it was his pleasure that the blind man should use the means which he

prescribed to him. Thus it is with us. Though God alone can convert us, we must not neglect the means of grace. The chief of these means, which is prayer, I have already mentioned to you; but I would wish to say a few words concerning the others.

To prayer, then, you should add *a diligent study* of the Bible. It is not enough to read it through, but you should *study it carefully*. Endeavour to ascertain its meaning; and for that purpose, compare one scripture with another, looking up to God for light and direction in this most beneficial exercise. You should also read frequently the works of evangelical writers, and hear, as often as you can, the sermons of evangelical preachers. The frequent perusal of religious books is of the utmost consequence to those who would wish to make progress

in the spiritual life ; but I have long thought, that the writings and sermons of those who treat merely of morality are comparatively of little use. To the outward means, add inward endeavours. *Strive to believe*—strive to attain a *realizing faith*.

To explain what I mean by this expression, I will make use of a familiar comparison. You entertain no doubt, of course, that there is such an empire as that of China, but do not think of it, perhaps, above once a-year. Very different are your feelings with regard to your sister Julia. I believe I may venture to say, that not a day passes over your head in which you do not think of her, and that you frequently indulge in pleasing anticipations of what may pass between you when you meet again. I am far from condemning these feelings ;

they are amiable and commendable ; but I beg to remind you, that there is One to whom you are infinitely more obliged than you possibly can be to Julia, and who ought to be as frequently the subject of your thoughts. Think of Him who expired in agonies, at the very mention of which human nature shudders, to atone for your sins. Behold him, as it were, dying on the cross for you. Then direct your thoughts to that place where he still liveth to make intercession for you. Imagine the greatest and best of all Beings as looking down upon you with an eye of inexpressible benevolence, and addressing you in these most encouraging words, “ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” Matt. xi. 28 ; and then ask yourself, whether there be any thing in this world for

which it would be worth your while to turn your back upon such a Saviour, and to reject such gracious offers?

But it is not enough that you think of these things now and then, or at distant intervals. The oftener you think of them, the more pleasure you will take in such meditations, and the more you will feel inclined to indulge in them again. I must add, however, that you should not only think of what Christ has done for you, but also of what you ought to do for him. Endeavour to say with sincerity, as David did, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?" Psa. cxvi. 12. Let your look to Jesus be a look of gratitude and of imitation. Read with the utmost care, his life, his discourses, and the writings of his apostles, in order that you may ascertain how best to

show your gratitude ; that you may learn how to live to him who died for you. In short, my dear Catherine, it is my earnest wish and entreaty, that you would use all these means and endeavours, and use them *immediately*. “Behold, *now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation,” 2 Cor. vi. 2. He who promises pardon, does not promise to-morrow ; and if you should now reject that hand, which is, as it were, stretched out to receive you, it may soon—you know not how soon !—be withdrawn for ever. I shall say no more upon this part of my subject. I have already extended this Letter to a much greater length than I at first intended ; but I felt unwilling to leave any thing unsaid that I thought might be of use, *either to explain the doctrines of the gospel, or to impress them upon your mind.*

I am now about to conclude ; but before I do so, I would wish to say a few words, in order to obviate some objections which may perhaps occur to yourself, or which may be suggested to you by others.

The first of these which I shall notice, is this : You may perhaps be told, that, according to my system, you must be always thinking of religion, which is impossible.

But this objection is founded on mistake. I readily allow that it is impossible to be always thinking of religion, neither is it possible for the learned to be always thinking of their books. Yet surely there is a very considerable difference between a learned man and an ignorant one : and, to pursue the comparison a little farther, though the learned may meet with many interruptions

to their studies, they are apt to look upon those interruptions as troublesome, and they gladly return to their studies when they can. Thus it is also with the truly religious.

Another objection which may perhaps be made to my system, is, that it is *too strict*, and that all this strictness is not necessary. To this I would reply, Can we make ourselves *too sure of heaven*? Is not St. Peter's advice most wise and rational, to give all diligence to make our calling and election SURE? 2 Peter i. 10. An error on this side can lead to no bad consequences whatever; an error on the other side must be fatal and irretrievable. Besides, every true christian remembers, that he is not his own, that he is "bought with a price," 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20; vii. 23; with no less a price than the blood and the agonies of the

Son of God ; and this thought is of itself enough to set him free for ever from all absurd apprehensions *of being too strict*.

But some, perhaps, may tell you, that if you lead such a life as I have been describing, you will be *singular and particular*. To such I would answer, that the people of God are uniformly described in scripture as “ a peculiar people,” Titus ii. 14. We are told that they are not of this world, John xv. 19 ; xvii. 16—that they love not the world—that they are not conformed to the world, Rom. xii. 2—that they are crucified to the world, Gal. vi. 14. These are striking texts.—But, above all, I would wish you seriously to consider the very remarkable words of our Saviour himself, “ Enter ye in at the strait gate : for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that

leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it," Matt. vii. 13, 14.

That you, my dear Catherine, and every member of our family, may belong to that *happy few*; may know by experience the change I have been describing; and may rejoice in Christ Jesus both in time and in eternity, is the sincere and earnest prayer of

Your truly affectionate Sister,

HANNAH SINCLAIR.

TO THE READER.

SUCH were the religious doctrines of this most excellent person, on which she acted with unceasing attention. Those who witnessed her serenity of temper—her uniform cheerfulness—the pleasure she enjoyed in constantly doing good—the patience and resignation with which she bore up against the sufferings of a protracted illness—and the confident hope she entertained of future happiness in another state of existence—feel it a duty incumbent upon them, most earnestly to recommend to others her principles and her example, as the most likely means of attaining eternal felicity.

[The subjoined Letter from Mrs. HANNAH MORE to Sir JOHN SINCLAIR, is written with so much ability, force, and elegance of expression, that (the consent of that celebrated Author having been obtained) it requires no apology for laying it before the Public.]

*Letter from Mrs. Hannah More to Sir
John Sinclair.*

SIR,

I FEEL much gratified at receiving from your hand the valuable little work you have done me the honour of sending me. I know not whether I should

most congratulate you on having possessed such a daughter, or sympathize with you on having lost her. It is delightful to reflect, that while she is gone to join the society above, for which her whole life seems to have been a preparation, she has perpetuated her name by this valuable Epistle; and not only her name, but her desire of doing good, for which she seems to have had a peculiar vocation.

She was, indeed, a most extraordinary young lady. Her views of the christian Religion are very deep. She has taken, in a short space, a comprehensive survey of its doctrines. These doctrines, in her estimation, are not merely a beautiful theory, consisting of speculative dogmas, but the sound substratum of all practical holiness. Every other way of considering this all-im-

portant subject is, in my opinion, dangerous and delusive. Those who divide doctrine from practice, of which we have lately heard so many unhappy instances, separate what the scriptures have joined in indissoluble union. This young lady's life seems to have furnished an admirable comment on her writing : she wrote as she lived ; she practised as she believed.

I trust that this posthumous publication will not only have the happiest effects on the beloved sisters, for whose use it was more particularly intended, but on as many as shall peruse it, particularly on those of her own sex, age, and rank in life. Of her it may, with peculiar emphasis, be said, that, being dead, she yet speaketh

I enter exactly, sir, into the sentiment

with which you conclude your preliminary address; the very character and exemplary life which so happily fitted her for the blessed state on which she is entered, unspeakably sharpen the feelings and aggravate the loss of her afflicted relatives.

Cordially wishing you, sir, and your mourning family, all the consolations which religion can bestow, and there are no others worth the name, I remain,

With much respect,

SIR,

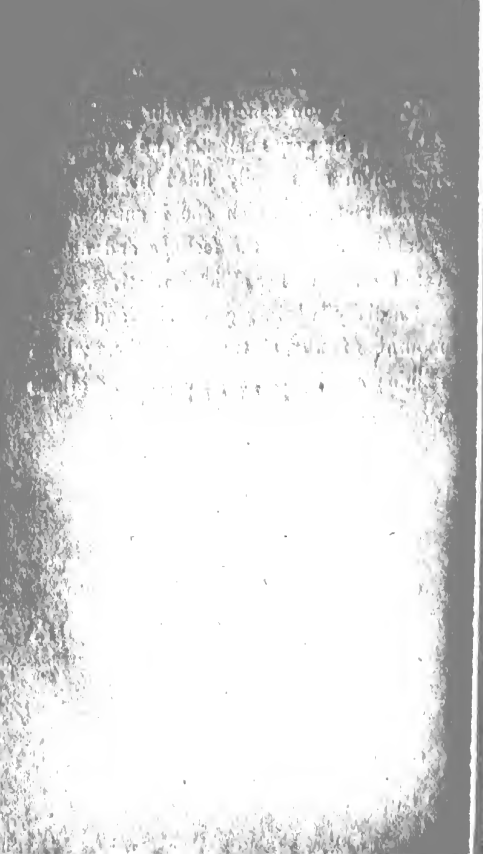
Your very obliged

And faithful Servant,

HANNAH MORE.

Barley Wood, near Bristol,

June 13, 1818.



MEMOIR.

145129

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PREFACE.

A CLERGYMAN of great respectability, (the Reverend Josiah Pratt,) to whom Sir John Sinclair sent a copy of his deceased daughter's Letter on the Principles of the Christian Faith, suggested in his reply—

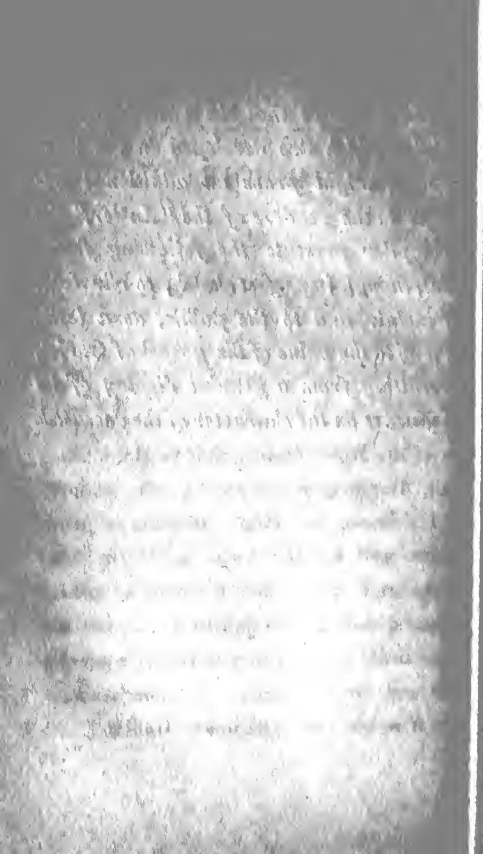
“MISS SINCLAIR has, doubtless, left private papers behind her, which develop the beginning and progress of religion in her own mind. You would confer a great benefit, dear sir, on young persons, for many years to come, if you would provide that a Memoir should be drawn up from those, or any other authentic documents, detailing the principal circumstances which

marked the efforts of her mind, under the guidance and grace of the Holy Spirit, in travelling from the darkness of nature, to the clear and bright regions of truth and day. Such a Memoir, prefixed to the Letter, and the whole printed in the more permanent form of a small volume, would, with God's blessing, prove of great use, especially to the young."

A similar opinion having been also given by others, to whose judgment Sir John Sinclair pays great deference, he requested a friend to arrange, in the form of a Memoir, such materials as were accessible, through different channels of communication with Miss Sinclair's relatives and intimates.*

* The Rev. Legh Richmond, Rector of Turvey, in Bedfordshire.

In the hope that the christian principles, which are developed in the narrative, might prove an additional benefit to the readers of the "Letter," the compiler presents the following faithful, though imperfect sketch, to Sir John Sinclair, and to the public, as a testimony to the value of the gospel of Christ, resulting from a genuine display of its influence on the character of the deceased.



MEMOIR,
OF
MISS SINCLAIR.

HANNAH SINCLAIR was the eldest daughter of the Right Honourable Sir John Sinclair, Baronet, of Ulbster, in the county of Caithness, in North Britain; a gentleman well known to the public by his works on financial, and a variety of other subjects, and by his practical, as well as theoretical, exertions in matters of agriculture and civil economy. Her mother was the daughter of Alexander Maitland, of

Stoke Newington, Esq. She died during the infancy of the subject of this Memoir.

The distinguishing character of this lady's early years in childhood, was a mind far beyond what is generally discovered at the same age. A thirst for superior knowledge, and a comprehensive understanding, directed even to abstruse subjects, marked her as an uncommon child. Amidst the playfulness and ordinary occupation of extreme youth, there was a determination of mind towards intellectual attainments, which would not easily be restrained.

At the infantine age of eight, nine, or at most ten years, she had read through a great number of volumes in a library belonging to her father at Thurso Castle, in the county of Caithness, where she and her younger sister resided with her grandmother, Lady

Janet Sinclair. She read authors on every variety of subject : history, fiction, divinity, philosophy. Her delight was to read a new book ; and on whatsoever subject of literature it treated, her young mind seized upon it with singular avidity. She was often seen to be climbing on chairs, even when so little a girl, to search for what many grown persons would think very dry reading. She never took pleasure in the common amusements of children : to amuse her, there must be always something to engage the *mind*.

She had a turn for argument. One day she took a clergyman into her nursery, opened her Bible, and desired him to explain a passage which she did not fully understand. He did so, but she was not satisfied with the explanation, and argued the point, until he left her with much astonishment at the

depth and acuteness of intellect displayed by a child not yet ten years old.

She possessed at this time great powers of memory : the clergyman of the parish church dining with her father on a Sunday, Hannah was asked for an account of the sermon. She went so regularly through the heads of the discourse, and what was said upon each, that the minister (who, contrary to the practice of many in the church of Scotland, read his sermons) declared he could not have told half so much about it himself.

At that period she often spoke of religion, especially to the servants ; some of whom were pious. She would converse, and even argue, about faith and works, evincing no small share of attention to the distinct nature of each. But it may be doubted, and her

own subsequent and deliberate acknowledgments confirm the doubt, whether that germ of spirituality, which afterwards so strikingly adorned her more mature character, was yet formed.

The early expansions of intellect must not be confounded with the genuine operations of Divine grace. No mere characteristics of mind, nor amiableness of natural disposition, must usurp, in our apprehension, the place which is alone due to the influences of the Holy Spirit in changing the heart of man, and making him "a new creature in Christ Jesus." Hannah Sinclair's own views on this subject, as recorded in the first pages of the preceding "Letter," are conclusive, and perfectly accord with the representations made in the word of God, on the fall and recovery of man.

Nevertheless, it is always important to ascertain the constitutional character of the mind, previous to the formation of the gracious principle ; to trace the specific effects of the Spirit's operation on the heart, and to observe how, amidst the diversity of natural intellect and affections, God makes use of the gifts and talents bestowed upon his people, for the furtherance of his own glory in their salvation.

To the intelligent observer of the history of the church of Christ, the period of infancy will often afford the most valuable materials for unfolding "the mysteries of his kingdom."

It is also of the first consequence to exhibit the benefits which may arise to children from an early acquaintance with the holy scriptures, and a judicious cultivation of useful knowledge in general. Even re-

ligious parents err too frequently, in forming a right estimate of the duty of giving an early direction to the infant mind, as to the *essentials* of christian knowledge, displayed in the pure gospel of the Redeemer.

After the period above mentioned, Miss Sinclair came with her grandmother and younger sister to reside in Edinburgh. Here they first enjoyed the privilege of attending the parochial ministry of the Rev. Dr. Walter Buchanan, of the Canongate church. She soon testified a partiality for the sermons of her valuable pastor, and retained much of them in her juvenile, but well-stored recollection. Yet still, in order that *her own* views of the progress of principle in her heart may be faithfully kept in sight, it is proper to observe, that, during the three years which were then passed in

Edinburgh, an intellectual, rather than decidedly spiritual, attachment to the great truths of the gospel, was manifested in her conversation and deportment.

At thirteen, Hannah was placed at a school in Stoke Newington, near London. Here she distinguished herself in every branch of education, which more especially calls forth energy of *mind*. She excelled in history, geography, the elements of astronomy, arithmetic, grammar, and the French language. But for the lighter accomplishments, excepting music, which she cultivated with much success, she had no inclination. She took great delight in the celestial globe, and once calculated an eclipse, with no other assistance than the remembering to have been told some time before, how it ought to be performed.

Still, however, although her mind was pursuing and acquiring knowledge with an eagerness seldom witnessed at the same age, the distinguishing characteristic of true religion was undeveloped. Her governess had a great respect for religious principles, and a stricter regard to many points of regularity was observed, than, it is deeply to be lamented, is usual at schools in general. But, to be faithful to the history of the work of God upon her heart, it did not as yet appear that her mind was inwardly and affectionately sensible of the vast distance which subsists between a *mental* assent to the truth and decencies of religion, and a *spiritual* reception of its power into the heart. At the same time it should be remarked, that as she grew up, good sense and benevolence were manifested in her whole demeanour and

aspect. To those, who are unconscious of the vital character of the principles by which “the wisdom that is from above” is distinguished ; principles ratified by the Saviour’s blood upon the cross, and very distinctly portrayed in the excellent “Letter” to which this Memoir is prefixed : to such Hannah Sinclair would have appeared, as in *every* respect, even then, a *real* christian.

She returned to Edinburgh at the age of sixteen, and was restored to the accustomed privilege of attending on the ministry of Dr. Buchanan. Not long afterwards the time arrived, when the great concerns of eternity began to interest her heart in a manner to which it had hitherto been a stranger. The truly scriptural and impressive instructions of her esteemed pastor seemed in an especial degree to be accompanied with a

blessing from Him, “with whom is the preparation of the heart.” The value of an immortal soul, the uncertainty of human life, the approach of another state of existence, the fall of man, the corrupt state of the sinner, the wrath of God against sin, the awful consequences of spiritual ignorance and error, were subjects which now occupied her thoughts, and led her to contemplate, with seriousness and solemnity, that great question, “What must I do to be saved?”

Amidst many feeble notions, and dark conceptions, as to what real religion was, and what it was not, she formed the deliberate resolution of becoming religious, of devoting herself to God, and seeking in right earnest for him, who is “the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.” The doctrines of the cross were no longer viewed as subjects

of a mere acquiescent speculation, but as the soul and substance of present and eternal happiness.

She afterwards often looked back, and was filled with astonishment, that so small a seed should bring forth any fruits. But He who planted nourished it; and to Him alone she ascribed the rise, progress, and increase. She now felt the decided conviction, which was strengthened by the deliberate conclusions of her future and more matured judgment, that she must, on scriptural grounds, from *this* period, date the holy and happy change of “passing from death unto life,” through the renewing influence of the Spirit of God upon her soul.

The reader is referred to her own “Letter on the Principles of the Christian Faith,” for a proof of the clear and consistent views

which she entertained of the nature of that spiritual change.

From this time, although nothing *very* striking, or observable, to those around her, might be apparent, yet there was a great and felt alteration in her views, desires, and pursuits. Her devotional exercises, although they had never been externally omitted, were now performed with a regularity and earnestness which gave them an entirely new character. The sabbath was not only more punctually observed, but its essential privileges were duly and gratefully prized. The faithful preaching of the gospel was now ardently desired, and beneficence to the poor became a more fixed principle. Until then, she had not comprehended the force and meaning of the apostolical injunction, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of

God ;” nor to apply it, in what are usually considered the more trifling concerns of daily occurrence. *Now*, that precept was written upon her heart, and became the regulating motive of her conduct.

Under such circumstances, nothing could be more favourable to her christian progress, than a constant attendance on Dr. Buchanan’s ministry ; for which she felt to the end of her life, that she never could be sufficiently thankful. His affectionate manner was well calculated to make a deep impression : and his truly christian spirit forcibly struck her, as indicating that there is, in true religion, somewhat infinitely beyond what appears in the lives of even the decent and moral ; that there is an *uniting* principle, by which the sinner obtains an interest in all that the Saviour is, and all that he has done, for man.

The great fundamental points of scriptural doctrine, such as the utter depravity of human nature, salvation through a crucified Redeemer, the necessity of the continual influences of the Holy Spirit, and of holiness of life, had long been subjects of mental acquiescence on the part of Miss Sinclair; but they had never, until this period of her life, produced that solicitude and desire which binds them on the conscience, and makes them the actuating principle of the affections. Like Job, she had *previously* heard of God “by the hearing of the ear,” and had lived in comparative self-complacency; but *now*, her “eye saw him” in his grace and truth, and the result was similar: she “abhorred herself, and repented in dust and ashes.”

She lived at this time as much out of the

world as was in her power. She had no real liking for its company nor amusements. Although possessed of qualifications which would have been deemed ornamental to the most polished circles, yet she sought not her happiness there. She loved retirement, and wished for communion with God. With the pious she had little opportunity of confidential intercourse. Her much-valued minister she occasionally saw, but it was in company with others, and he had then no particular knowledge of the change which had been wrought in her sentiments.

She now first commenced the affectionate and dutiful task of instructing the younger part of her father's *second* family, in the different branches of education, wherein she herself excelled. It was her delight to inform their young minds. She had the hap-

py art of making instruction agreeable, by the interesting mode in which she communicated it. Many a time would her little brothers and sisters beg as earnestly for a lesson, as others commonly do for a holiday. These valuable exercises made a deep impression on their young minds, from the kindness with which they were given : and are still remembered with affectionate gratitude by those who were the objects of her sisterly care and love.

Miss S. was modest and gentle in her temper, and without the most distant appearance or assumption of superiority. It was necessary to be thoroughly acquainted with her, before it was discoverable how much her mind exceeded others. She had a remarkable candour in the exercise of judgment, and never could bear to think or

speaking harshly of any one. She esteemed what was amiable, even where she saw cause to lament that real religion was deficient; but her estimation of such qualities was of a discriminating character, and did not lead her into any erroneous conclusions, to the disparagement of those affections and motives to action, which Divine grace only can bestow.

She had a perfect indifference to finery and ornament in dress, not unfrequently remarking, how wearisome it was to hear that subject so constantly spoken of; and expressing a wish that there was but one fashion, which never changed. But with her distaste to the pride and frivolity of external attire, she possessed most correct and consistent ideas of neatness and propriety.

With her, the apostle's precept had great

weight. She sought not "that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or putting on of apparel." But it was "the hidden man of the heart, in that which was not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price."

It were happy for many of those who profess the same sentiments of religion which Hannah Sinclair did, if a more holy indifference and more consistent abstinence on the score of external decoration, were as visible and exemplary as in the present instance.

But her regard for simplicity in matters of outward appearance had an additional motive. She was thereby enabled to appropriate the more to purposes of beneficence. She acted upon the christian principle,

that charity loses its own appropriate distinction, if not accompanied by self-denial.

Miss Sinclair was a great advocate for justice, as well as mercy, in what she distributed. She weighed with much delicacy and propriety of judgment the relative circumstances of each case of distress which was submitted to her notice. She thus found herself enabled to do far more essential good, than by an indiscriminate mode of alms-giving. She felt it a duty, as much as possible, to add the labour of investigation to the indulgence of a benevolent spirit.

Hers was a rare union of intellectual with spiritual attainment, enveloped in a robe of modesty and retiredness, which shrank from observation. But whilst we are called upon to speak of and admire what constituted so valuable a character, the christian memori-

alist will always feel, that to the Author of every virtue and every grace the praise alone is due.

What she was, she was by the grace of God. Wherein she differed from others, it was He that made her to differ. It was the unvarying language of her own heart, when living, and should be of all who, while they admire, would follow her steps, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake," *Psa. cxv. 1.*

The design of christian biography is to glorify God, by recording the mercies which he bestows on his sinful creatures. It is to exhibit the loveliness of that new disposition which grace produces; but, in doing so, to ascribe whatever is excellent to its originating source. The highest character to which,

since the fall, man can aspire, is that of “a sinner saved by grace.” And every sinner, so saved, will wish and endeavour, that of all which he is, and all which he is to be, the Author and Finisher of his faith may have the undivided glory.

To those who are at all acquainted with the interior history of the hearts of real christians, and with the manifold exercises of their thoughts, it will not appear surprising, that a mind, constructed like Miss Sinclair’s, should, at some periods, have been exercised by deep and anxious speculations on mysterious points, connected with some of the great doctrines of the gospel.

It was not until about the age of twenty-one, that she communicated to a confidential friend, how much she had recently suffered in reflecting on the subject of the nature and

duration of the future misery of the wicked. For a considerable time she remained at a loss how to take that comprehensive view of the different attributes of God, as unfolded in his revealed word, which might enable her to rest her judgment with composure on the result of the question. Her reflecting mind frequently revolved the subject, and still doubts and difficulties were presented.

After this, she expressed great anxiety as to the real nature of the doctrine of the Trinity, and of the theological language in which it was sometimes expressed. Occasionally, darkness and confusion, on this point, produced much disquietude.

She was also led into earnest, and sometimes distressing thoughts, in regard to the sovereignty of God, in the plan of salvation

in the commencement, carrying on, and final consummation of the work of grace in the hearts of his people.

She did not at that time *express* any doubts relative to the other truths of the gospel; but long afterwards told her friend, that there was not one of them, in the belief of which she had not at some period or another been shaken.

But let not this case be misapprehended. Hers was not the hesitation or unbelief of the infidel, but the doubts of an inquiring mind, anxious to arrive at the truth. All this while, she appears to have been convinced of the reality of the christian system in the aggregate, but felt a solicitous uncertainty as to some particular tenets. She was even daily and usefully instructing the young members of the family in many es-

sentia! points, before she had cleared up others to her own satisfaction.

The judicious friend, to whom she unbosomed her inmost thoughts, was often distressed at the state of her mind ; but seldom argued with her, and rather talked of the lovely features of christianity ; the beauties of holiness, as exhibited in the face of our Lord, and in a faint degree, in that of his people ; the grandeur and magnificence of the scheme of redemption ; and the things that belong to our everlasting peace. Her friend felt assured, that as religious principles gained strength through study of the scriptures and prayer, her doubts would vanish, and only prove a prelude to a solid and permanent peace of mind. Hannah repeatedly said, how much she was benefited by these observations, and expressed

the most affectionate anxiety not to lose the advantages which they afforded her.

Accordingly her mind became gradually and substantially composed, in regard to each and every one of those difficulties, which for a season had disquieted her. So true is it that, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord," Hosea vi. 3.

Through mental trials of such a description, God exercised her faith and patience for a while, only that his own glory might be the more abundantly promoted, by her happy attainment of that "peace which passeth all understanding." It is "thus that he giveth his beloved rest," Psa. cxxvii. 2.

Religious friendship and intimate communication of heart, founded upon mutual experience of Divine mercy and love, are means

of grace, which in the secret, and for the most part undeveloped history of private christians, promote much of their growth and advancement in the divine life. Such opportunities can never be too highly prized; their remembrance will ever be sweetly cherished, whilst we live on earth, nor does it appear probable, that they can be forgotten in glory.

Miss Sinclair was constantly in the habit of studying books on all subjects of a literary character, whose tendency she believed to be that of enlarging the mind, and furnishing it with materials for useful meditation. Amongst the manuscripts in her own hand-writing, which were discovered after her decease, appeared extracts from Paley's *Evidences of Christianity*, Reid's *Inquiry into the Human Mind*, Addison on

the Christian Religion, and Campbell's Lectures on Ecclesiastical History. As a proof that her mind was not unaccustomed to abstract reasoning, these papers contain some well-arranged passages on the Geometry of Visibles, the Powers of Vision, and the Theory of Optical Instruments, with some philosophical and metaphysical observations connected with these subjects. The date of these papers was not ascertained. But although her mind was well stored with the materials which literature afforded, and that in some branches not so usually cultivated by her sex, yet no one was ever more unobtrusive, diffident, or unassuming, in manner and deportment. Her object was the attainment of valuable knowledge, but not its display. Her disposition had the genuine characteristics of female delicacy. She pos-

sessed a mind fraught with masculine energy, but it was veiled from general observation, by a modesty as truly feminine, as by a humility essentially christian.

In the year 1806, twelve years before her death, Miss S. was first seized with the fatal complaint which at last terminated her life. A neglected cold began to assume serious appearances, fever ensued, and the physicians apprehended danger. Of this she was not herself aware ; but those around her were surprised with the patience and good humour exhibited during her illness. To one of the family, who afterwards asked her the cause of it, she said, “ it proceeded from trust in God, who, she knew, would manage much better for her, than she could for herself.”

She never entirely recovered her health,

but was for some years tolerably well, more especially during the summer season. During that period it was remarked, that in each succeeding year towards the end of her life, she manifestly grew in grace, and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. No more was heard of doubts; the doctrines of the gospel were now her only trust, and dependence upon the Saviour her greatest joy. She could now, both intellectually and spiritually, trace the origin and progress of that confusion of thought on some mysterious points, which had formerly prevailed in her mind. She could review them with calmness, and repose them with consolation on the bosom of her heavenly Father. She saw more clearly the distinct provinces of faith and reason in matters of religion. Where, aforetime, she was at a loss to ac-

count for the Divine procedure in some particulars of the economy of grace, she now felt satisfied, that as they were indisputably revealed in the word of God, so, considering how little we know, or can know, of the vast extended universe, it were folly to suppose, that we can reconcile to our limited conceptions, the ways of Him, who directs the whole. Where her reason could not comprehend, faith acquiesced in revelation, and so her heart found peace with God.

In 1814 Sir John Sinclair and his family left Scotland, and went to reside on Ham Common, in Surrey, not far from London. She had here the privilege of cultivating the christian friendship of a few very estimable individuals, with whom she enjoyed an affectionate intimacy. She had also the satisfaction, as often as her declining health would

permit, of attending the faithful ministry of the clergyman of the parish church, from which she derived much solid edification.

During this concluding period of her life, she became the diligent visitor of the sick and instructor of the poor, near her residence, amongst whom her name and memory will be long held in grateful affection.

It is amidst scenes of this nature that the christianity of females shines with its own appropriate lustre; and in this department of benevolence, pursued with active simplicity and devotedness of mind, Miss Sinclair most usefully laboured.

An increasing anxiety for the spiritual, as well as temporal, welfare of her father's family, was manifested in the pains which she took with the younger children. This was further proved by the "Letter on the

Principles of the Christian Faith," written to one of her sisters, solely with a view to private advantage, and without the most distant idea of its being made public.

Such an elder sister was truly a blessing to her domestic circle. An intelligent writer, after speaking of the value of the female, and more especially the maternal character, justly remarks :

“ There is another class of females, whose power of benefiting their immediate connexions, and ultimately society at large, is often second only to that of mothers themselves, but whose duties have not, perhaps, been sufficiently noticed in the exhortations which have issued from the press, or been inculcated in the pulpit ; we mean the elder sisters in large families.

“ On these, in the event of the death of one or both parents, and even in a considerable measure during their lifetime, must often devolve a large part of the task of forming the minds and regulating the principles of the junior branches of the household. Their more immediate contact and intercourse with them, together with other circumstances, will often invest them with an influence, which though *nominally* far less than that of a mother, will not unfrequently be found *practically* equal, or even greater. The difference of age and pursuits between the parent and child is such, that they must necessarily live in a very different world: the child, therefore, though it may respect and obey the parental decision, and know it in theory to be the best that can possibly be given, finds, perhaps, no common ground

between them on which to argue the question, and would not, therefore, be displeased to discover how the same subject would be viewed by those whose age and circumstances would tend to bring the parties somewhat nearer together.

“ Again, every age has its peculiar fashions and modes of instruction : and a younger child is often more swayed in its *real* opinions, whatever it may ostensibly profess, by the conduct and sentiments of one who has gone over identically the same ground, though advanced, in its estimation, to a vast distance of superiority, than by the views of one who has been educated under different circumstances, who has not read precisely the same books, been influenced in childhood by exactly the same associations with the junior members of her own family.

A parent often appears ‘ a being of other days ;’ an elder sister is a friend of the same generation, who sometimes, in the child’s estimation, makes up, by greater similarity of education and views, what may be wanting in maturity of thought and authority of character.”—*Review of “ Hannah Sinclair’s Letter,” in the Christian Observer, No. 204.*

Too wide a currency cannot be given to sentiments of so much domestic importance.

In the summer of 1816, Miss S. visited an endeared relative and congenial friend in Scotland. Of the frame of her mind at that time, some idea will be formed from the following observation, which she made early one morning : “ I never have been so happy as last night. I was not able to sleep, and

began to meditate on the employment of saints and angels around the throne. I ruminated, until I thought I saw the multitude of the redeemed, which no man can number. I fancied I heard their angelic voices singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Methought I joined with them, and at last I concluded by praying that I might be soon, if not immediately, removed, to unite my note of praise with theirs."

Such expressions illustrate the character of those highly favoured moments, in which God is sometimes pleased to animate his faithful people, by a peculiar blessing upon their meditations, concerning the heavenly state. "He thus giveth songs in the night," Job xxxv. 10.

Miss Sinclair was possessed of a mind feelingly alive to the rich features of the

sublime and the beautiful, with which the scenery of her native country is adorned. No where could such a taste be more substantially gratified than on the spot where the foregoing meditations were enjoyed, and where many of her happiest hours had been spent in the society of her sister, Lady Colquhoun, at Rosedoe-house,* on the banks of Loch Lomond.

There are few contemplative christians who have surveyed the loveliness and magnificence of Loch Lomond, studded with its numerous islands, encircled with its mountains, and beautified with its groves and rocks, but must have felt that the Mighty Architect shone with a resplendence

* The seat of Sir James Colquhoun, Baronet, who married the second daughter of Sir John Sinclair.

of creative power peculiar to the place. To such an eye, the majestic dignity of Ben Lomond, reflected in its mountainous mass from the bosom of the lake, and contrasted with the rugged pinnacles of the neighbouring hills, would ever suggest sacred and delightful subjects of contemplation.

Not a ray of sunshine, or a beam of moonlight, would glitter amidst the vast display of objects, but it would seem to speak the glory of its Maker. Whether viewed in the early dawn of the morning, the brightness of noon, the calmness of evening, the sobriety of twilight, the dimness of the starry night, or the silver lustre of the moon; in all its varieties, this noble and congenial prospect would be, and was, the delight of a mind constituted like that of Hannah Sinclair.

Here she often sought and found her God in the wide range of his wisdom and power, whilst she was privileged to share in the delights of kindred and christian communion with the beloved friend of her infancy, childhood, and youth.

In 1817, she first commenced a Diary, wherein to record, for her own personal benefit, some of the reflections of her mind on passing events. This was unknown to her friends until after her decease. The following extracts are here subjoined, and will serve to unfold something of the exercises of a heart so evidently sincere in its converse with God.

In the perusal of these simple and inartificial illustrations of her thoughts, the real christian will discover much of what has often passed in his own. In this develop-

ment of the recesses of one heart, when engaged in the work of self-communion, a kindred sympathy will arise in others. They throw light upon the real character of the individual who recorded them, as well as upon the principles contained in her published "Letter." The same views of natural depravity, of the atoning merits of Christ, of the necessity of the Spirit's influences, of the efficacy of prayer, of the unworthiness of the creature, and of the rich mercies of God through the Redeemer, which are so faithfully stated in the "Letter" to her sister, all manifestly appear, from these extracts, to have filled her own heart with self-abasement and gratitude. As such, they will, in their original simplicity, approve themselves to every kindred mind.

They are now withdrawn from their

hitherto sacred privacy, not that they may pass through the ordeal of the cold and fastidious critic, but rather that they may instruct and warm the heart of the sincere christian.

EXTRACTS
FROM
MISS SINCLAIR'S DIARY.

*Ormsly Lodge, Ham Common,
Sunday, Jan. 5, 1817.*

As it appears from the memoirs of many eminent christians, that it has been their practice to keep a diary or journal of their religious experience, and that they have derived much benefit from that practice; I propose (in humble dependence on the Divine blessing) to follow their example in that respect. May that great and glorious Being, without whose assistance I can do

nothing aright, guide my pen ! May he open my eyes to discern my sins and failings of every kind, and to record them with sincerity and truth ! May he also enable me to record with real, heartfelt gratitude the mercies with which he may be pleased to favour me ; and when exercised with vexations or disappointments, may he enable me to receive them, and to write about them, without a murmuring word or thought, saying, as Job did, “ Shall I receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall I not also receive evil ? ”

It is my duty at all times to dedicate myself to the service of my God and Redeemer, but I would desire to do so especially now, at the beginning of a new year. O ! that this year may be better spent in every respect, than those which have preceded it !

Do thou, I beseech thee, O ! my God, give a check to the wanderings of my mind, and enable me to love thee with more sincerity, and to serve thee with more fidelity, than I have ever yet done !

January 12.—Read Hervey's Theron and Aspasio. Earnestly wished and prayed that I may obtain that precious faith which he so well describes. Heard something in the course of the day which much hurt me. Endeavoured to feel resigned.

January 13.—Awoke this morning in a better frame, and felt during the whole day more disposed for the duties of devotion than usual. Lord, I thank thee for this great mercy. In the afternoon I heard an attack made on some of the doctrines of the

gospel, and did not say much in their defence. But, Lord, thou knowest I was kept silent only by the fear of doing more harm than good. Thou knowest I highly prize thy gospel.

January 20.—This day my mind was full of fears and doubts of various kinds. Read Hervey, Newton, and Chalmers' Evidences. Prayed earnestly for a confirmed and assured faith.

January 21.—The day being mild, I ventured to take a walk in the garden: every thing there looked dull and withered; but soon, O, my God! may we expect to see the face of nature revive at thy command. O that thou wouldst be pleased also to revive the power of religion in my

soul, and cause it to grow, and to flourish, more than it has ever yet done !

January 26.—My devotions, both to-day and yesterday, met with many interruptions, various things occurring to take up my attention.—O ! that my heart were more fixed, that it were not such an easy matter to take off my thoughts from the great truths of religion, and indispose my mind for the duty of prayer !—In the forenoon of this day read two religious pamphlets, written by a quaker ; was much struck with a description in one of them, of the horrors and miseries of war, and earnestly wished that this dreadful scourge could be banished from the earth.

January 27.—My mind this morning

full of foolish thoughts ; composed myself with difficulty, and prayed sincerely, but not with fervour. Heard in the evening with pleasure, that one of my sisters had been arguing in favour of some of the great doctrines of the gospel, with another person. Lord, grant, I beseech thee, that she may not only defend the gospel in theory, but feel its transforming influence upon her heart !

January 29.—This day not well spent ; my devotions much neglected : surely, Lord, I have great cause to be humbled before thee : O ! that thy strength may be made perfect in my weakness.

January 30.—Heard an attack made on a pious and faithful minister, and took his

part : felt inclined to be angry, but endeavoured to check that sinful propensity.

February 1.—I have this day, Lord, as thou knowest, completed my 37th year. O ! that I could add, that every one of these years, since I became capable of knowing thee, had been indeed devoted to thy service. But when I reflect on the manner in which they have been spent, I cannot but blush, and be confounded, in thy awful presence. I can only address thee in the words of the publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner !” Yet, Lord, I cannot but hope that, in the course of the year which is past, I have made some little progress in thy good and holy ways, that my faith is confirmed, my desires to love and serve thee more sincere and lively. Surely, if it be so, I have much

cause for gratitude to thee. Thou knowest, that my most earnest wish is to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of my God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. In him would I desire to place all my hopes, and surely, Lord, they shall not be disappointed.

February 2.—Awoke this morning in a good frame of mind, and prayed with fervency and pleasure: read the Bible, and Skelton's Dialogues. As my life is particularly retired and uniform, I purpose, for the future, to write in this diary only once a week, on sundays, unless any thing remarkable should occur on a week day.

February 9.—Yesterday evening our heavenly Father was pleased to bestow upon our family another proof of his great mercy,

in the safe delivery of my sister-in-law, Mrs. Sinclair, of a daughter. Accept, Lord, our humble thanksgivings, and do thou, I beseech thee, perfect the recovery of the mother, and grant that the child may live to praise thee, and, above all, that she may live to thy praise. May she not only be devoted to thee in baptism, but may she be a christian indeed and in truth.—Was at church to-day, the first time for some months, and felt glad to be again able to enter the house of prayer.

February 16.—Was not able to go to church to-day, the weather being too cold : but heard that Mr. — had preached a truly scriptural and very impressive sermon on the parable of the pharisee and publican. Regretted that I was not present, but felt

grateful for the prospect of having such a preacher in the vicinity, and implored a blessing on him and his labours.

February 23.—I spent the forenoon in reading, meditation, and prayer. In the course of last week paid a visit to Mr. and Mrs. — of —; was much struck with the appearance of piety and devotion which I saw there.

March 3.—Walked to Richmond Church; felt too coldly disposed for devotion. Lord, I beseech thee, pardon my weakness, and enable me for the future to devote all my days, and especially my sabbaths, unto thee!

March 23.—Have at length been privileged to hear Mr. —, and listened to

his sermon with perfect delight. He preached from Isaiah xxviii. 16, and described in a most affecting manner, the nature of that union with Christ, on which all our hopes depend. Prayed that I may know by experience what it means, and that this sermon may be blessed as the means of reviving the power of religion in my soul. Hope it may be so, as I felt deeply impressed by it.

April 20.—Was again at Kingston church, and again heard Mr. ——. He preached from the three concluding verses of the gospel of St. Matthew, and gave such an interesting view of the power, the grace, and the faithfulness of our Divine Redeemer, that I was quite delighted, and felt truly grateful for having been permitted

to hear such a sermon. Hope it may be the means of confirming my weak and wavering faith.

May 4.—Was at Kingston church. Prayed with fervency, when I came home, and spent the remainder of the day, on the whole, profitably. I hope that religion has of late been on the advance in my soul. Grant, I beseech thee, O ! my 'God, that it may be so indeed !

May 11.—During the whole of the last week have been in a better frame than usual. Lord, accept my humble and grateful acknowledgments for his mercy. Have been reading Dr. Chalmers' Discourses, and admired them greatly. Was happy that — had a plan of getting them translated into

the German language, as I hope they may do good among the infidel philosophers of that country.

May 18.—Heard a charity sermon at Kingston, from the Dean of Westminster, for the benefit of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. He gave a very good discourse from Mark xvi. 15. Last week, on the whole, profitably spent, although, at one time, I suffered myself to be unreasonably discomposed at a trifle.

May 25.—In the evening had some serious conversation with my sisters, and was particularly pleased with what one of them said. If, in any respect, thou, O God, shouldst be pleased to make me instrumental to her spiritual benefit, I would desire

to be truly grateful to thee, for having thus blessed my feeble efforts.

June 1.—Accompanied Lady Sinclair to Kingston church, where we partook of the sacrament, for the first time in England. Pardon me, I beseech thee, Lord, if I have not been prepared according to the purification of the sanctuary. Grant, Lord, that this service may be blessed to my soul, and that as I have outwardly partaken of the symbols of my Saviour's broken body and shed blood, so I may inwardly feed upon Him by faith with thanksgiving !

June 8.—Was at Teddington church, and heard Mr. ——— preach from John xiv. 21. He gave a very interesting discourse on the various degrees of happiness in the

Redeemer's mansions above. Hope that I do not decline in religion ! but, alas ! my progress is much slower than I could wish.

June 15.—Heard Mr. ——— again. A very ingenious and interesting sermon on the doctrine of regeneration, from 2 Kings iv. 37. Grant, I beseech thee, O ! my God, that the opportunities I now enjoy of hearing the gospel, may not be lost upon me. For some weeks, thou knowest, my mind has, on the whole, been in a better frame than formerly. Do thou, I beseech thee, perfect that which is yet lacking in my faith, and reform whatever thou seest amiss in my conduct. In thee would I desire to put my trust, and surely thou wilt not suffer me to be confounded.

June 29.—Mr. —— preached from Acts xi. 26. and gave a very just and pleasing description of the character of a real christian. Lord, grant that this character may indeed be mine, that I may make nearer and nearer approaches to it, the longer I live, through the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit !

July 20.—I have lately made a very valuable acquaintance in Miss ——, who has every appearance of being a real christian. Lord, bless our intercourse, and grant that I may derive true and spiritual benefit from it !

August 3.—In the course of last week was introduced by Miss —— to some poor people in the neighbourhood, and determin-

ed to visit them occasionally, and to read the Bible to them. On Saturday I went to one of them, read and explained the second chapter of Ephesians. Lord, enable me to keep this resolution, and grant that these readings may prove beneficial both to myself and my neighbours. Read Leighton on the Psalms to-day, an interesting book lent me by ———, and heard the children in the evening.

August 10.—The weather unfavourable, so that I could not go to church. In the course of last week visited several of my poor neighbours, read and explained the scriptures to them. Hope to derive benefit from this exercise. In the fore part of this day, I felt very cold and dull; but in the afternoon better disposed for devotion. Read

the Bible and Leighton. In the evening, heard the children read, and was particularly pleased with some observations made by one of them.

August 17.—Was again disappointed in going to church by the weather. O ! do thou, Lord, supply in private, the advantages of which I am deprived in public. Thou canst make ample amends for the want of outward means, and I earnestly implore thou wouldst now do so to me.

August 24.—Confined at home by the weather. Read the Bible, Leighton, and Watts's Meditations. Was much pleased to find that some of my sisters, one day last week, had been very kind to a poor woman, and that they showed great anx-

iety that she might receive religious instruction. Grant, I beseech thee, O Lord, that the impressions made upon their minds may not wear off, but prove real and permanent !

August 31.—Heard a very interesting sermon from Gal. vi. 14, on “Glorying in the cross.” The latter part of last week was comfortably and profitably spent, but the beginning by no means so. Have pity on my weakness, Lord, and teach me how to love and serve thee. Have compassion on a poor unsteady creature !

September 21.—Was at Kingston church. Felt too much of a cold and careless frame while there, and during the whole day. Alas ! Lord, I know not at all what to say

for myself ! I fear such conduct must be very offensive in thy sight ! O, cause me, I beseech thee, to return unto thee. Grant that thy word may come home to me with the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power, and may be the means of reviving the power of religion in my treacherous heart, of which I have still cause to complain !

October 5.—Heard a beautiful sermon from Mr. —, on Ephes. v. 18, and afterwards partook of the sacrament, which he administered in the most impressive manner. Surely, Lord, I have now every assistance that means can afford me, but, I well know, that all will be ineffectual, without thy blessing. Be thou graciously pleased to impart that inestimable blessing, which

maketh us indeed rich both in this world and in that which is to come, and which addeth no sorrow with it. Heard the young people, as usual, in the evening.

October 19.—Was occupied, during a great part of the day, in writing a Letter to my sister Catherine, at her request, explaining the evangelical system of religion. Do thou, I beseech thee, O ! my God, grant me the powerful assistance of thy Holy Spirit in the composition of this Letter, that I may be enabled to explain clearly, and to enforce earnestly, the interesting and important truths which I have undertaken to illustrate. O ! that all my hopes with regard to this Letter, and in every respect, may be in thee ; for without thee, I can do nothing !

November 2.—Heard to-day a truly interesting sermon from Matt. v. 6. Grant, I beseech thee, Lord, that I may indeed hunger and thirst after righteousness, in the various senses which Mr. —— described, and that the promise in the text may be fulfilled in my experience.

Presented to Catherine this evening the Letter which I have been writing to her. O ! that it may be blessed by thee for her spiritual benefit, and for that of the other members of our family !

November 9.—Heard, in the course of last week, of a most striking and afflicting event—the death of the Princess Charlotte and her child. Grant, O Lord, I beseech thee, that the event may be sanctified to the Royal Family, and to the nation at large !

surely it is a most affecting call to repentance, and to prepare for death.

November 16.—Heard Mr. —— preach from Isaiah xl. 6, a most eloquent funeral discourse on the Princess's death.

November 19.—Was again at church, being the day of the Princess's funeral. Mr. —— gave a very affecting discourse from Hosea vi. 1. The church excessively crowded. All ranks seem to be much impressed by the late awful event. May God grant that the impression may be lasting on the minds of many !

November 30.—Heard a charity sermon at Kingston from Mr. —— . Was interrupted in the evening. Lord, I fear that

this month has not been well spent, notwithstanding the frequent opportunities I have had of hearing the word of life. Alas ! what a cold, dead heart have I ! O do thou strengthen my weak faith. Revive my languid affections, and grant that in the continuation of this journal, I may be enabled to give a more favourable account of myself. I implore it for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

These extracts abundantly witness how close a union always subsists between the reception of the scriptural doctrines of grace into the heart, with unaffected humility, and active obedience to the will of God. Miss Sinclair appears, from her published "Letter," as well as from every other testimony, to have had peculiarly clear views of the

principle and plan of salvation, as enforced by the apostle. “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the *gift* of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them,” Eph. ii. 8—10.

She felt no difficulty in reconciling the precepts which enjoin a sober, righteous, and godly life, with the essential truth of the word of inspiration, that “to him that *worketh not*, but *believeth* on him that justifieth the ungodly, *his* faith is counted for righteousness,” Rom. iv. 5.

She felt from the experience of her own heart, what is “the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness

without works ;” and yet put her seal to the sacred declaration, that “blessed are they that do his commandments,” Rom. iv. 6 ; Rev. xxii. 14.

During the year 1817, she was frequently engaged in reading the following books, in addition to those referred to in the preceding Diary: Witherspoon’s Essays, Scott’s Force of Truth, Romaine’s Life of Faith, Buchanan’s Christian Researches, Richmond’s Annals of the Poor, Owen on the Work of the Holy Spirit, Flood on the Divine Conduct, Coles on God’s Sovereignty. These volumes she greatly valued, and often observed how much comfort and edification she derived from their perusal. The works of the celebrated Hannah More were likewise the frequent subject of her meditations.

In October, 1817, she wrote the “Let-

ter on the Principles of the Christian Faith," to a younger sister. It will be seen from her Diary, in what spirit she accomplished this task. In writing to a confidential friend, she mentioned the pleasure which she felt in this act of sisterly duty and affection; but also with her usual diffidence, expressed her fear of not executing it as she ought. It was, however, composed speedily, and without any particular care, excepting to explain sufficiently the infinite importance of the subject on which it treats, and to enforce the truths of religion upon the minds of her family. Its publication was the last thing she designed when she wrote it. She was indeed solicited by a friend, to allow it to be printed anonymously, as a tract for distribution amongst the poor. But she never gave her consent to the proposal.

Another view of the thoughts and affections of this interesting character will be obtained, by the insertion of the two forms of prayer, which were accidentally discovered in her own hand-writing, a year and a half after her decease.

It is in the secret retirement of the closet, that the reality of personal religion is ascertained; when the heart communes with itself in the stillness of solitude, and pours out its inmost feelings before God. At such seasons is that intercourse sustained, on which the vigour of the spiritual life so essentially depends. The sincerity of character may here be brought to its most simple and conclusive test.

These prayers Miss Sinclair appears to have drawn up for her own use, as the result of many deep and anxious exercises of

soul. These *sacra privata** exhibit a portraiture of mind, in which many humble and devout christians will discover their own similitude. They are inserted not without the hope that they may become practically useful to some, as a guide and model for their devotions.

A Prayer.

Ever blessed, and most adorable Lord God Almighty! Thou, Lord, art the first and the last, the greatest and the best of Beings, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the blessed and only Potentate, who alone hast immortality, who dwellest in light

* A title given to his Meditations and Prayers, by the Bishop of Sodor and Man, Dr. Thomas Wilson.

inaccessible, whom no mortal eye hath seen, or can see, to whom be glory for ever and ever. When I reflect on thine infinite majesty, thy glorious perfections, and, above all, on thy spotless purity, I may well be ashamed to approach thee, or to take thy holy name into my polluted lips ; but thou hast thyself assured us, that thou art the hearer of prayer, and thou hast commanded us to make our supplications unto thee. Encouraged, therefore, by thine own declarations, and in obedience of thine own command, I would now desire to pour out my soul before thee, and to entreat that thou wouldst be merciful to me a sinner.

When I look back on my past life, when I consider what I have been, and compare it with what I ought to have been, I cannot but be deeply sensible of my own guilt and

unworthiness. Which of thy holy commandments have I not broken, times and ways without number ! I have done those things which I ought not to have done, and have left undone those things which I ought to have done, and there is no spiritual health in me. Woe, woe is unto me, because I have sinned, because I have so grievously offended thee ! But blessed, for ever blessed, be thy holy name, there is mercy with thee, that thou mayst be feared, and plentiful redemption, that thou mayst be sought unto. Thou hast laid our help upon one who is mighty to save ! Oh ! that I may be enabled from the heart to renounce every false confidence, and every refuge of lies, and to lay hold on the hope set before me in the gospel.

Remove, I beseech thee, every remaining

doubt and perplexity from my mind, and grant that I may rely on the Lord Jesus, and on him only, for salvation, and for every spiritual blessing. For his sake, pardon, I beseech thee, my multiplied and aggravated transgressions, and give me a just sense of the evil and demerit of sin, that I may indeed be humbled in the very dust before thee, and may have that genuine repentance which needeth not to be repented of again. For his sake I would also implore thee, that I may be renewed in the spirit of my mind, after thy Divine image. I would acknowledge before thee, (oh! do thou make me more and more sensible of the important truth,) that I am insufficient of myself even to think a good thought; that all my sufficiency is of thee. Oh! do thou create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit

within me. Make me in every respect such as thou wouldst have me to be, and to thy thrice holy name be all the praise.

With respect to my future lot in this life, I would desire to resign myself entirely to thy Divine disposal. Do with me what thou wilt; deprive me of what thou pleasest; cross, in whatever manner seemeth good unto thee, my foolish wishes and inclinations; only bestow on me my daily bread, and a spirit of resignation and contentment. Enable me to say to thee at all times from the heart, and with perfect sincerity, "Not my will, but thine be done."

And, that I may be enabled more cheerfully to confide in thy goodness, I would desire to recollect the many mercies I have received from thee in the times that are past, and thankfully to acknowledge them

before thee. I would bless thee, O my God ! that ever since I had a being, thou hast never ceased to provide for all my wants, and to load me with benefits, and that thy mercies have been continued to me every night, and renewed every morning. Surely goodness and mercy have hitherto followed me all the days of my life, and thou hast often caused my cup to run over. Oh ! make me truly grateful to thee for all thy mercies, and above all, for thy spiritual mercies.

I would bless thee, O my God ! that thou hast not confined our views to this vain and transitory scene, but hast taught and encouraged us to hope for a state of perfect and endless happiness beyond the grave. I would bless thee, that my ears have ever heard the joyful sound of the gospel. I

would thank thee for all the opportunities of religious instruction I have enjoyed, especially for the encouragement thou hast given me, to expect the gracious assistance of thy Holy Spirit, and, above all, for thy unspeakable gift—That thou so lovedst a lost and guilty world, as to give thine only and well-beloved Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life. Oh! that my very heart and soul, and all that is within me, might be stirred up to bless and magnify thy holy name, for this transcendent instance of Divine mercy, and that, from a just and lively sense of infinite obligation, I might henceforth endeavour to live to Him who died for us.

I would further desire, ere I conclude my address to thee, to recommend to thy favour and protection my kind and beloved friends,

all whom I am bound by any tie to pray for. Oh! do thou bless them in all their concerns; grant them as much worldly prosperity as is consistent with their own best interests, and with the purposes of thy providence concerning them. Above all, grant that their souls may prosper, that they may all of them be united to the Lord Jesus, and finally admitted into thy heavenly kingdom. I would pray for the prosperity of my native land. I would thank thee for the invaluable privileges thou hast bestowed upon it, and would earnestly implore a continuance of them. I would also pray for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, that the glad tidings of salvation by Jesus may be sent to all the ends of the earth, and that numbers may be daily added to the church, of such as shall be saved.

My humble prayers are before thee, O my God and Father. Listen to them graciously, I beseech thee, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake; and to him, with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, I would desire to join with angels and archangels, in ascribing glory, honour, and dominion, henceforth, even for evermore.—Amen.

Another Prayer.

To thee, Blessed Jesus, the eternal Son of God, and the Redeemer of a lost and ruined world, would I now desire to look up, and most humbly and earnestly to implore thy gracious aid.

Thou hast assured us, that whosoever cometh unto thee, thou wilt in no wise cast out; and that whosoever believeth on thee,

shall not perish, but have eternal life. Lord ! help thou mine* unbelief. I would desire in the first place to adore that undeserved goodness, that astonishing love, which led thee to forsake thy heavenly throne, to take upon thee our nature, to fulfil in our stead all righteousness, leaving us an example that we should follow thy steps ; nay, to humble thyself unto death, even the cursed death of the cross. To die that we might live, to die in agonies, which human

* It may not be uninteresting to the christian reader to be informed, that in the original copy, Miss S. had at first written this sentence, “ Lord, *I believe* ; help thou mine unbelief ; ” but conformably to a diffident and spiritual delicacy of feeling, her pen subsequently crossed out the words, “ I believe,” and left the latter, as a memorial of the tenderness of her conscience, and the lowly views which she took of herself in the presence of God.

nature shudders even to think of, that we might escape the pains of hell for ever.

Surely, if I have any feeling, any sense of gratitude in me, it ought to be exerted in the very highest degree, when I reflect upon what thou hast done and suffered for us sinners. Grant, I beseech thee, that thy death and sufferings may not be in vain, as to me. Confirm, Lord, and increase my faith, and bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of thee. I would desire to accept of thee in all thy offices, as thou art freely offered in the gospel. As my *Prophet*, to believe whatsoever thou hast revealed; as my *Priest*, to rely upon thee, and thee only, for salvation, renouncing every other hope and confidence; and as my *King*, to submit to thy all-righteous laws. Oh that thou mightest be made of

God unto me, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption.

Make me, I beseech thee, more and more sensible of my need of a Saviour, and that thou art just such a Saviour as I need. Lord, save, or I perish. Lord, have mercy, or I am all undone. I am a vile sinner, deserving nothing at thy hands but condemnation. But thou didst descend from heaven to earth to seek and to save that which was lost. Oh ! that thou wouldst receive me—accept of me—bless me—take me into the number of thy genuine disciples, of thy little flock ; save me, I beseech thee, from the guilt and the punishment, and also from the power and dominion of sin. Enable me from henceforth to live to thy praise, to be a christian, not in name only, but in deed and in truth.

Oh ! that thou wouldst manifest thyself unto me, as thou dost not unto the world. Show me thy glory. Fill my mind with joy and peace in believing. Remove my doubts. Quiet my fears, console me in adversity, meet me in thine ordinances, support me at all times. Never leave nor forsake me, and do to me and for me—exceedingly abundantly above all that I can ask or think, and to thy thrice holy name be everlasting praise. Amen.

During the last two years of her life she enjoyed the intimacy of a christian friend in the neighbourhood of Ham Common, from whose society she derived much benefit and consolation.—With her she was accustomed to visit the sick poor, and to engage in the work of their instruction.

Many of the most useful lessons which christians of higher rank in society ever learn for their own spiritual advantage, are obtained in the dwellings of the poor. When they, happily for themselves, as well as the objects of their pious benevolence, become, like Miss Sinclair, the frequent visitors, the assiduous instructors, and the diligent superintendents of the poor, the ignorant, the young, and the distressed; results of eminent importance continually arise. In the schools of *spiritual* charity, the teachers are taught, the benefactors are benefited, the comforters are comforted, and the visits of mercy to man are repaid by visits of mercy from God.

That thus "it is more blessed to give than to receive," was fully proved to Miss S. whilst she was engaged in these labours of love.

In the month of January, 1818, when engaged in one of these errands of kindness, she caught an additional cold, which terminated her life in the May following. She became gradually weaker, and ceased to record the thoughts of her heart in the Diary. The concluding sentences of this kind were found in a separate paper, of which the following is a copy.

Concluding Diary.

Sunday, Dec. 28, 1817.—Again at home. My heart in a better frame than last sunday, for which I would desire to be thankful. In the course of last week we had an evening party, which occasioned a great bustle in the family—felt thankful for the retired life I generally lead, and that I

meet with so few interruptions. Heard the children in the evening.

Jan. 4, 1818.—It has pleased my heavenly Father to bring me to the beginning of another year. Surely I ought not to suffer such seasons to pass over without humbly and earnestly resolving, “so to number my days, as to apply my heart unto wisdom.” In the year that has just passed, I flatter myself that I have, upon the whole, rather gained than lost ground; though, alas! I have many things to reproach myself with, and have had many vicissitudes in my religious course. Even this morning, my mind was so full of foolish thoughts, that I could scarcely compose myself, so as to pray to my heavenly Father. Lord! I would resolve to walk more stedfastly in the

year that is to come, if thou shouldst spare me to see the end of it; but in thy grace alone do I rely for power to keep that resolution. I am much too prone to form resolutions in my own strength. Oh! do thou cure me of this sinful propensity. Enable me, I beseech of thee, to put a more entire reliance on the blessed Jesus than I have ever yet done. May he indeed be, according to the heads of a sermon suggested by my beloved sister, “all my strength, all my righteousness, and all my joy.”

Jan. 18.—In the course of last week was far from well, and was bled yesterday: feel weakened, and not able to exert myself much in the way of religious duty. Lord! pardon this, and grant that this illness may be the means of bringing me nearer to thee;

and then, assuredly, I shall have no cause to regret it.

Feb. 1.—This is my birth-day. I have now spent thirty-eight years in this vain, insnaring world. Surely, Lord, the advance of time, and my very delicate health, call loudly upon me to prepare for death. Oh ! may I listen to the call, and do thou assist me in my preparation ; for without thee I can do nothing. Still feel very poorly and weak ; but found liberty and comfort in my devotional exercises.

Feb. 8.—This morning my heart was in a particularly cold and careless frame ; but in the after part of the day, performed my devotional duties with comfort to myself. Oh ! do thou, Lord, fix this unsteady heart,

and grant, I beseech thee, that this illness may not be lost upon me in that respect !

She afterwards wrote occasionally a very few lines to her sister, Lady Colquhoun, who from infancy had been the depositary of her confidence and affection. They were executed with much difficulty, but clearly expressed the consolatory state of her mind, her entire resignation to the Divine will, and the hope she entertained that her illness would be blessed to her.

At this period she once said to a friend, "I never spend one dull hour;" although she was very often necessarily left alone, being unable to bear the fatigue of society for any length of time together.

The flattering nature of the consumptive disease, and the medical cautions which, in

the great state of weakness to which she was reduced, were observed towards her, might probably not lead her to anticipate that death was quite so near at hand as it eventually proved. But the tranquillity, resignation, and devotedness of her mind, testified how ready she was to depart, whenever it should please her heavenly Father to call her home.

A friend who well appreciated her state of mind, wrote at that time: "Our dear Hannah is sweetly and gently leaning upon the Beloved: however exemplary and consistent her life and conversation have been, she has no confidence in herself. The Saviour's righteousness is her strength, and his everlasting love her hope." It was added, "her views are clear and scriptural; not perhaps triumphant, but solid and placid."

On another occasion, the same friend

wrote : “ She yesterday derived great strength and comfort from the visit of the Rev. Mr. ——. He selected the 23d Psalm, as a portion of scripture for our consideration. He beautifully and affectionately led us to the death of the christian, evidently manifesting his sure hope of her stedfastness in the faith, and his conviction of the far greater probability of hers being a sickness unto death. He asked our friend, if she did not believe that Christ’s everlasting arms were underneath for support ? She replied, ‘ Yes ; and that is all my strength and confidence.’ He then prayed, under the full impression of the same ; and with this trying exercise, in her weak state, she did not confess herself to be fatigued.”

The same friend wrote on a subsequent day : “ I was with her last night, and

although my conversation was short, it will, I am sure, afford you satisfaction. Being left alone with our dear friend, I asked her whether there was any passage in the sacred volume which afforded her especial consolation? She answered, 'Yes,' and repeated, 'As thy day is, so shall thy strength be,' Deut. xxxiii. 25 ; together with these words of Isaiah, xliii. 2, 3, 'when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.'

"She told me that she had felt some doubts and anxieties respecting herself at the commencement of her present illness.

I remarked, that at such a time, although the enemy of souls might make a vigorous attack, to deter her from the profession of her faith, that Jesus Christ was the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, and that his was a finished salvation. She replied again, ‘It is indeed a finished salvation, and none can pluck us from his hands.’

“I then read to her the hymn, ‘When languor and disease invade,’ &c. She thanked me most affectionately, and we parted for the night.”

A younger sister one day lamented, that her sufferings were so great. She replied, “I would cheerfully suffer it all over again, that *you* might enjoy the same consolation from religion in the same circumstances.”

This gave rise to a conversation on the impossibility of *any* sufferings of ours

procuring for ourselves or others either temporal or spiritual benefit, and the necessity of the anguish which Christ endured on our account.

Although her daily conversation at this period did not seem to indicate her own apprehension of *immediate* death, yet the solemn, serious, and interesting delight, which she took in religious intercourse, listening to the scriptures, and other congenial books, when read to her, manifested that the whole tendency of her thoughts was directed toward "the rest which remaineth to the people of God," Heb. iv. 9.

Conversing with a friend, she observed, "how delightful it was to think, that in one moment she might be removed from that sick-bed to a world of glory."

"Her thoughts and occupations," writes

a near relative, who witnessed her faith and patience at this trying period, “were in sickness, as they also had ever been in health, such as became one so deeply impressed, as she had the happiness to be, with the unspeakable comfort, as well as importance which belongs to the truth, as it is in Jesus.”

She took particular pleasure in the 53d, 54th, and 55th chapters of Isaiah. She often desired one of her sisters to read them to her, and always desired her to pause at the seventh verse of the 54th chapter: “For a small moment have I forsaken thee: but with great mercies will I gather thee.”

One near and dear friend, who constantly wrote to her from the north, repeatedly alluded to what she considered as the dying circumstances of Miss Sinclair. Those

letters were written under that impression, and with a view to support her mind in the prospect of it.

She used to have them frequently read to her, would lay them under her pillow, and after reading the last which she ever received, observed that *these* letters were always written in the language and spirit which she most desired, and that this in particular was a source of great delight to her.

Her uncommon patience struck every one who saw her. She never complained; and when it was noticed to her, said, "It would be a wonder if I were not patient, when I have so many mercies to be thankful for."

After any distressing fit of cough or breathlessness, when asked how she felt, she would merely answer, "Better;" but the slightest complaint never escaped her. Be-

fore her death her breathing became much worse, and she was so weak as to be unable to turn in bed. Her mind at this time occasionally wandered, probably from her being obliged to take laudanum. Often, however, she was perfectly herself, especially when religion was the theme, and her mind to the last at times retained its wonted superiority.

The last words she ever spoke to one of her brothers were, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John ii. 15.

On the day before she died, having recovered from a breathless fit, she asked Lady Sinclair to read the Bible, and being desired to fix upon the place, said, "The two chapters at the end of St. Matthew,

which describe the sufferings and death of our Saviour." These were read, and she was able to listen to the whole. Some time after she wished one of her sisters to read, and left the choice to herself. The eighth chapter of the epistle to the Romans was selected, and read to her.

Subsequently to this she remained chiefly in silent meditation. A few minutes before three in the morning, a faithful and pious servant, who was constantly with her, asked if she should turn her. The reply was, "No, I am so comfortable and happy, I had better remain as I am."

At three, she literally fell asleep in Jesus. She departed without even a finger being moved, and when her attendants thought she was sleeping.

She was found with a perfectly placid

and serene countenance ; a happy emblem of that peace, which her departing soul had experienced.

Never was a death-bed more tranquil and calm. Not a doubt nor a fear disturbed her. Not a complaint or a murmur once escaped her lips ; “ all was peace, peace ! ”

As her life was retiring and placid, so was her death. “ She softly lived, and at length gently slept in Jesus. She did but, as it were, breathe under his shadow, and found his fruit sweet unto her taste.”

Thus closed the mortal pilgrimage of Hannah Sinclair.

Her remains were deposited in the chancel of Kingston church, to await the great day of the resurrection of the just.

Some of her friends among the poor pressed respectfully forward, when the funeral

was over, to view their benefactress's place of rest, and to embalm her relics with their affectionate tears.

The following extracts of letters, from two of her most intimate christian friends, on the occasion of her decease, shall conclude this Memoir.

“I am persuaded, from her natural reserve and timidity of character, that an acquaintance of years was requisite to have discovered her talents, acquirements, and various *graces*. For that they were graces, I have repeatedly heard her confess, when I was unwilling to believe there could have been much to check, or subdue, in her temper and disposition; so greatly did she adorn her outward profession by a conde-

scending, useful, benevolent, and amiable conduct to all around her. During the last year and half of her life, I had the privilege of introducing her to many of the sick and dying poor; and I have reason to believe, that not a few have blessed the God of their mercies, from the advantages they derived from her visits; although through her diffidence, I had some difficulty in prevailing with her to go alone.

“With respect to intellect, as far as my observation and judgment allowed me to form an estimate, I should say, it was strong, and accompanied by an uncommonly retentive memory. Her piety was unquestionable; I can bear full testimony to her love, her humility, her patience under great privations from sickness, and her affectionate zeal in training the younger branches of her

father's family in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Every sabbath evening was regularly devoted to this exercise. There was not one of her near relatives, for whose immortal interests she did not feel the deepest anxiety. She often spoke on this subject with a fervour and solicitude truly amiable and truly christian. It evidently lay very near to her heart."

A letter from another correspondent concludes thus :

"Alas ! what a friend have I lost ! with more propriety, however, I should express my gratitude to God for having given her to me at first, preserved her life for so many years, united us in uninterrupted friendship, and blest me with the well-grounded hope of meeting to part no more.

“ Her latter end was indeed peace. Not a fear disturbed her serene composure ; and whether she conceived that her change so nearly approached or not, nothing but faith in Christ could have supported her in undisturbed tranquillity, when in such trying circumstances.

“ The things of time may afford some satisfaction to us while they are continued ; but when all enjoyment in them is taken away, what but a hope full of immortality can enable the christian to maintain a calm resignation, and scarcely to feel their loss ? — May I then die the death of the righteous, and may my last end be like his ! ”

BUNGAY: PRINTED BY J. R. AND C. CHILDS.





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